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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 05/27/08

Index:

- 1) Top headlines
- 2) Editorials
- 3) Prime Minister's daily schedule (Nikkei)
- 4) Ambassador Schieffer golfs with Koizumi, Aso and other LDP bigwigs (Mainichi)
- 5) New testimony from one of returned abductees affirms that Megumi Yokota was alive at the time North Korea said she had died from suicide (Nikkei)
- 6) TICAD4: Prime Minister Fukuda to announce \$4 billion in yen loans to Africa (Nikkei)
- 7) Government to add another \$50 million in emergency food aid (Yomiuri)
- 8) Japan to send reconstruction survey team to Burma (Nikkei)
- 9) Symposium on Asia's future with U.S., Japanese, Chinese and South Korean participants recommends new multilateralism mechanism to meet crises (Nikkei)
- 10) Foreign minister lays out in speech scheme for investment in Mekong River area (Nikkei)

G-8 Environment ministers meeting:

- 11) G-8 meeting on environment closes without reaching agreement on medium-term target (Nikkei)
- 12) Ministers at G-8 environment meeting find road to setting

post-Kyoto greenhouse-gas reduction goal not so easy (Tokyo Shimbun)

Defense and security affairs:

- 13) Democratic Party of Japan Security General Hatoyama against extending the Indian Ocean refueling law (Tokyo Shimbun)
- 14) Ruling parties may let Iraq reconstruction assistance law and the ASDF dispatch allowed by it expire (Tokyo Shimbun)
- 15) Fire on U.S.S. George Washington may delay the arrival of the carrier in Yokosuka (Tokyo Shimbun)
- 16) Defense Minister Ishiba's proposal for ministry reform upstaged by counterproposal from National Defense Academy head Iokibe (Yomiuri)
- 17) Proposal for a standing SDF overseas dispatch law drafted by DPJ's Maehara does not mesh with party head Ozawa's stance on such international service (Yomiuri)

Political agenda:

- 18) Nikkei poll gives Fukuda Cabinet a 3-point increase in support to 24 PERCENT (Nikkei)
- 19) Government to put off in this Diet session submission of name to fill vacant BOJ deputy governor's post (Tokyo Shimbun)
- 20) DPJ moving in direction of filing a censure motion against the prime minister or not (Tokyo Shimbun)
- 21) Government and ruling parties decide to convene extraordinary Diet session in mid-August (Tokyo Shimbun)

Articles:

1) TOP HEADLINES

TOKYO 00001438 002 OF 013

Asahi:

Government panel eyes easing rules on use of copyrighted works to cope with Internet age

Mainichi: Yomiuri: Tokyo Shimbun

Ex-gangster sentenced to death for fatally shooting Nagasaki mayor last year

Nikkei:

Japan firms making inroads into Africa to tap economic growth: Nissan to produce automobiles; Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to invest in nuclear power generation-related company

Sankei:

Comprehensive diplomatic and security policy preparatory committee that will directly report to prime minister to be established

Akahata:

New medical services system for very old people: Insurance premiums survey a means of covering up increased burden

2) EDITORIALS

Asahi:

- (1) Ex-gangster sentenced to death for fatally shooting Nagasaki mayor: Anger at terrorism renewed
- (2) G-8 environment ministers' meeting: We want to see moves for concessions

Mainichi:

- (1) G-8 environment ministers' meeting: Japan should be prepared to set mid-term goal of cutting emissions
- (2) Revitalization of education: Show reform ideals and approach in clearer manner

Yomiuri:

- (1) G-8 environment ministers' meeting: The goal has been set
- (2) Fatal shooting of Nagasaki mayor: Death sentence handed down to election- terrorist

Nikkei:

- (1) G-8 environment ministers' meeting: Limits to what can be done without goal

(2) Meaning of death sentence to ex-gangster who murdered Nagasaki mayor

Sankei:

- (1) Ex-gangster sentenced to death for fatally shooting Nagasaki mayor: Death sentence appropriate for election terrorism
- (2) Learning English from third grade: Clarify meaning of teaching

Tokyo Shimbun:

- (1) G-8 environment ministers' meeting: What approach should Japan take?
- (2) Africa aid: Pursue global interests

Akahata:

- (1) Secret deal on jurisdiction: Act not appropriate for independent country

3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

TOKYO 00001438 003 OF 013

Prime Minister's schedule, May 26

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
May 27, 2008

07:58

Attended a meeting on global warming at the Kantei.

09:33

Attended a ministerial meeting on the pension problem.

10:24

Visited the Burmese Embassy to sign a condolence book. Met Burmese Ambassador Hla Myint.

11:06

Arrived at the Kantei.

11:39

Arrived at his official residence.

12:25

Offered flowers at the graves of the war dead at Chidorigafuchi, Sanban-cho.

12:49

Arrived at the Kantei.

15:05

Met Dutch Prince Alexander, chairman of the UN advisory council on water and sanitation, and others at the Kantei. Later met Noda, chairperson of the LDP taskforce on global warming countermeasures, and former Chief Cabinet Secretary Shiozaki.

16:30

Met Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura.

17:00

Attended a party executive meeting in the Diet Building, with Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Ono present.

17:40

Attended a meeting of the Education Rebuilding Council at the Kantei.

18:02

Met Upper House Chairman Otsuji. Followed by Cabinet Intelligence Director Mitani.

18:57

Returned to his official residence.

4) Koizumi praises Aso's golf score as a number signifying increasing prosperity

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
May 25, 2008

Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi played golf on May 24 in Yamanashi Prefecture with Taro Aso and Hidenao Nakagawa, both former secretaries general of the Liberal Democratic Party, U.S. Ambassador

TOKYO 00001438 004 OF 013

to Japan J. Thomas Schieffer, and others. The former prime minister flattered Aso, a potential successor to Prime Minister Fukuda, saying, "Mr. Aso's score was 88, a lucky number implying increasing prosperity." Aso came in third in the round. In the past, Koizumi and Aso locked horns over the question of reinstating former Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Takeo Hiranuma, who bolted the LDP over postal privatization.

Lawmakers who took part in the event will call on such members as former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori and former Secretary General Kaoru Yosano to join a similar event. Koizumi reportedly commented about the timetable for Lower House dissolution: "It should be as close as possible to (September next year) when the term of (the Lower House members) expires."

5) Megumi Yokota "was alive even after June 1994," Chimura said, reversing North Korean side's previous account that "Megumi killed herself"

MAINICHI (Top play) (Full)
May 27, 2008

It was learned that former abductee Fukie Chimura (52), who now lives in Japan after returning home from North Korea, had told Japanese authorities that abductee Megumi Yokota (who had been kidnapped by North Korea when she had been 13) had moved in June 1994 next door to us." This testimony is contradictory to and reverse the previous account by North Korea that (Megumi) died in April 1994. It could have no small impact on the abduction issue.

Fukie made the above testimony to Japanese authorities late last year. According to it, Megumi moved alone in June 1994 to the next door to the guest house where Fukie and her husband Yasushi (52) lived together. Megumi lived there for several months there, but afterwards, her whereabouts became unknown.

According to Fukie's testimony, at the time Megumi was seriously depressed and she appeared in a mentally unstable state. A senior official of North Korea's External Intelligence Bureau (currently No. 35 Office) was taking care of her.

In the past, another former abductee Kaoru Hasuike (50) previously stated about Megumi that (1) she lived apart from her husband for both were at odds with each other one year (around Spring 1993) before North Korea told Megumi died; and (2) in March 1994, Hasuike helped Megumi to enter a psychiatric hospital. Except for cases of abductions of Japanese nationals by the former JAL Yodo-go jetliner hijackers in Europe, it was already learned that the North Korea's External Intelligence Bureau had abducted Japanese nationals.

As for Megumi's whereabouts, North Korea explained during the 2002 Japan-North Korea summit, where the North Korean side admitted to the abductions of Japanese nationals for the first time, that she had killed herself in March 1993. But after Hasuike made it clear in 2004 that he had been watching out for Megumi until 1994, the North Korean side explained, "Our official in charge had a hazy recollection, and corrected its earlier account and explained, "She committed suicide in April 1994."

Megumi's former husband, a South Korean abductee, whose whereabouts became known in 2006, also revealed at a news conference in North Korea: "Megumi suffered from depression and killed herself in April

TOKYO 00001438 005 OF 013

1994 at a hospital where she had been admitted."

6) Fukuda to announce in TICAD a plan to extend 4 billion dollars in yen loans to Africa over next five years

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Full)
May 25, 2008

Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda will announce in the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in Yokohama from May 28 a plan to extend up to 4 billion dollars in yen loans to Africa in the next five years. Japan has so far given African countries mainly grant aid. But based on the judgment that their ability to repay has improved owing to soaring prices of natural resources and other reasons, the government now believe that there is a growing need for even loans in order to promote infrastructure building.

The government has so far extended yen loans worth about only 200 million dollars to Africa annually. In the Group of Eight Summit (Gleneagles Summit) in 2005, then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi announced plans to double Japan's official development assistance (ODA) disbursements to Africa. Under this plan, the Japanese government has offered aid with no obligation to repay. Given this, only a limited number of countries have received yen loans.

The Japanese government's decision to offer yen loans stems from the judgment that African countries are now able to repay as a result of Japan's past debt forgiveness and the recent hikes of resource prices. The government has put forth the policy of reducing non-reimbursable ODA funds as part of efforts to reconstruct its finances. The yen loan program, which is outside this framework, can be flexibly utilized. The government is also aiming to counter China, which is beefing up aid to Africa in an attempt to secure natural resources there.

7) Government to provide additional 50 million dollars to deal with food crisis in developing countries

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
May 27, 2008

The government decided yesterday to provide an additional 50 million dollars (approximately 5.17 billion yen) in aid to developing countries suffering from soaring food prices. Prime Minister Fukuda will announce this plan in a speech he will deliver in the World Food Summit organized by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome to start on June 3. The government has already announced a plan to offer 100 million dollars worth of emergency aid by this July. Japan's aid to deal with food crisis in developing countries will total 150 million dollars (approximately 15.5 billion yen). This figure is the second largest, following the United States.

The Japanese government aims to take the initiative in discussions on food safety at the 4th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD4) in Yokohama starting on May 28 and the Lake Toya Summit (Group of Eight Summit) in Hokkaido in July, given the ongoing serious global food crisis.

8) Government to dispatch survey mission to Burma in preparation for sending medical care team

TOKYO 00001438 006 OF 013

NIKKEI (Page 5) (Full)
May 25, 2008

The Japanese government on the evening of May 24 announced that it would dispatch a four-member damage survey mission from the International Emergency Aid Unit to Burma, which was hit by a major cyclone. The government plans to send a medical care team after the mission assessing needs in disaster-hit areas.

The military junta in Burma had been rejecting accepting aid teams from abroad, except for those from neighboring countries, such as Thailand. However, it on the 23rd changed its policy and decided to accept aid teams, if their aim is to provide humanitarian support. Japan has thus far dispatched emergency aid goods worth 1.32 billion

yen to that nation, including tents and blankets.

9) 14th Future of Asia conference suggests need to establish crisis management framework to cover broad areas, including disasters, food

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
May 24, 2008

The 14th Future of Asia (hosted by Nikkei), a special forum where government leaders and business executives from throughout the Asia-Pacific region hold discussions, on May 23 had a panel discussion entitled "The political situation in East Asia." Participants from Japan, the United States, and China voiced the need to establish a security framework to manage crises, such as disasters, and the energy and food issues. Regarding North Korea, participants from Japan and South Korea emphasized the need to advance dialogue in order to keep North Korea from being isolated internationally.

Former Deputy Foreign Minister Hitoshi Tanaka, currently a senior fellow at the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE), heeding the recent Sichuan earthquake in China, pointed out: "The situation could have been different had there been the capability to deal with emergencies using aircraft under defined rules." Tanaka emphasized: "It is high time to take joint action in specific terms." Speaking of an economic framework, Tanaka suggested: "I think it is necessary to establish an organization that will broadly engage in issues ranging from macroeconomics to energy like the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development."

10) Foreign Minister Koumura in speech reveals intention to give boost to development and integration of ASEAN

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Full)
May 24, 2008

Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura delivered a speech at the 14th Future of Asia, an international forum hosted by Nikkei at a hotel in Tokyo. In the speech, Koumura suggested turning the Mekong River basin into an area of hope and development and revealed his intention to give a boost through official development assistance (ODA) and expansion of investment by the private sector to moves by ASEAN to grow economically and integrate.

The population of the five countries sitting on the Mekong River basin, including Thailand and Cambodia, totals 226 million. If this region grows economically, it could become a major market. With an

TOKYO 00001438 007 OF 013

eye on China, whose influence in the region is growing via its aid to the region, Japan intends to be further engaged in the region.

As the features of Japan's aid, Koumura presented three: (1) a need to establish democracy and rule of law; (2) integration of regional economies and promotion of cooperation; and (3) expansion of trade and investment.

Specifically, Koumura declared plans to help construction of infrastructure and accelerate moves for concluding bilateral agreements on investment as well as economic partnership agreements (EPAs). He also indicated a plan to introduce \$20 million for the construction of distribution networks to cover the Mekong River basin.

Meanwhile, former ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa had a dialogue with Indonesian Ambassador to Japan Jusuf Anwar on the sidelines of the 14th Future of Asia. Nakagawa referred to Japan's tax system and emphasized the need to lower the corporate tax, by noting: "The highest corporate tax in the world is imposed on firms. This situation may be seen as a closed-door tax system. We must first form a consensus and reform this system."

11) Greenhouse gas emissions cuts: Environment ministers of G-8 recognize need to set mid-term goals

NIHON KEIZAI (Top Play) (Excerpts)
Evening, May 26, 2008

The G-8 environment ministers' meeting, held in Kobe on the morning of May 26, wound up with the release of a chairman's summary, which incorporated the need to set mid-term goals of cutting greenhouse gas emissions. It stated a strong will to have the G-8 leaders attending the Lake Toya Summit in July work to achieve setting long-term targets to halve global emissions by 2050. It underscored the need for industrialized countries to take the lead in global efforts to cut emissions.

Strong will to have the G-8 leaders attending the Lake Toya Summit in July agree to halve emissions by 2050

Environment Minister Ichiro Kashiwa, who served as chair, said, "Though there were differences in opinions, I, as the chair, have put out the paper on my own responsibility. I want to see the chairman's summary back discussions by G-8 leaders." The chairman's summary is intended to boost talks for setting a post-Kyoto Protocol international framework to combat climate change from 2013 onward.

Outline of chairman's summary

- ? States a strong will to have the G-8 leaders attending the Lake Toya Summit in July agree to halve emissions by 2050
- ? Urges industrialized countries to take the lead in global efforts to halve emissions
- ? Recognizes the need to set effective mid-term targets with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) scientific findings on climate change taken into account
- ? Urges industrialized countries to tackle cutting emissions using nation-specific reduction targets and developing countries to constrain the increase in emissions
- ? Notes that a sector-specific approach is an effective means of

TOKYO 00001438 008 OF 013

achieving reductions but is not a substitute for total reductions targets

? Notes that a Kobe Initiative for talks to realize a low-carbon society will be held later this year

12) G-8 Environment Ministers Meeting finds bumpy road ahead for post-Kyoto mechanism

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Excerpts)
Evening, May 26, 2008

(Commentary)

The Group of Eight Environment Ministers Meeting, which was held in Kobe, brought about an agreement to halve global greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. But as some countries called the agreed goal "an illusion," the targeted year is 42 years from now, a distant future, and no specific measures have been presented.

The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stresses that if no countermeasures are worked out, the global temperature will rise about six degrees, eventually dealing a fatal blow to the ecosystem.

The panel also says that even if most effective measures are introduced, the temperature will unavoidably shoot up by around two degrees in the coming 30 years. It emphasizes the need for the industrialized countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 25 to 40 PERCENT from 1990 levels.

13) Government, ruling parties plan to open extra Diet session in mid-August with eye on holding revote on new refueling law revision bill

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)
May 24, 2008

The government and ruling parties decided on May 23 to convene an

extraordinary Diet session in the middle of August. They are determined that in an attempt to enact a bill amending the new antiterrorism special measures law, intended to extend the term of the new (refueling law), definitely by the end of December, it will be needed to move up its convocation substantially.

The new refueling law allows the Maritime Self-Defense Force to carry out refueling operations in the Indian Ocean. The term of the law will expire on Jan. 15 next year. The prevailing view in the ruling coalition is that since the mission poses little risk to MSDF troops, but it is great international contribution, according to a senior member of the New Komeito, the junior coalition partner of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

Meanwhile, Ichiro Ozawa, president of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the largest opposition force, has opposed an extension of the new refueling law, noting: "(SDF) operations that are not based on any UN dissolution are unconstitutional." In the House of Councillors, which the DPJ-led opposition camp controls, the DPJ put up do-or-die resistance by boycotting deliberations until the last day the constitutional 60-day rule can be applied. The constitutional article stipulates that if the Upper House does not take a vote on a bill within 60 days after receiving the bill, it is considered that that the upper chamber was rejected. There is a

TOKYO 00001438 009 OF 013

possibility that the largest opposition will take a similar response toward the new refueling law revision bill.

A senior LDP member pointed out: "When considering the possibility of a rejection of the bill by the opposition camp, we should open the extra session (in mid-August). A senior New Komeito member also said: "It's a reasonable plan."

14) Ruling parties mull ASDF pullout from Iraq

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)
May 26, 2008

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party and its coalition partner, New Komeito, entered into coordination yesterday for not seeking to extend the Iraq Special Measures Law, under which Japan has dispatched the Air Self-Defense Forces for activities in Iraq and which is to expire at the end of July 2009. The opposition parties are certain to oppose extending the law. In addition, the Nagoya High Court has ruled that the ASDF's Iraq activities are unconstitutional. Meanwhile, U.S. President Bush will retire from office in January next year. The ruling parties considered such circumstances in and outside Japan. With this as an opportunity, the ruling parties are expected to discuss when to withdraw the ASDF from Iraq.

Former LDP Vice President Taku Yamasaki, who chairs the LDP's foreign affairs panel, attended a panel discussion yesterday in Tokyo, during which he indicated that it would be difficult to extend the Iraq Special Measures Law.

Yamasaki also told reporters after the panel discussion that a United Nations resolution, which endorses the stationing of multinational forces in Iraq, is to expire at the end of December.

A New Komeito executive also said, "It's about time when we'd better consider when to withdraw from Iraq."

Meanwhile, when it comes to the Maritime Self-Defense Force's ongoing refueling mission in the Indian Ocean, the government and the ruling parties plan to extend a new antiterrorism special measures law, which is to expire in January next year, in an extraordinary session of the Diet to be called in mid-August.

15) Commander hints at delay in Yokosuka deployment

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 27) (Full)
May 26, 2008

The USS George Washington, a U.S. aircraft carrier of the U.S. Navy,

needs repairs due to a recent fire and its scheduled deployment to Yokosuka, Kanagawa Prefecture, will likely be delayed, U.S. Naval Forces Japan Commander James Kelly told the Tokyo Shimbun in an interview yesterday. The George Washington was to arrive at Yokosuka in August .

The George Washington will arrive at a naval base in the U.S. West Coast city of San Diego on May 28 to check its damage from the fire for about a week, Kelly said. After a damage check report, the U.S. Navy's leadership will judge what repairs the George Washington will undergo and at which base, according to Kelly.

TOKYO 00001438 010 OF 013

Kelly also revealed that the George Washington, currently scheduled to arrive at Yokosuka on Aug. 19, would have to delay its scheduled arrival, depending on its repair plan. "The schedule could be affected," Kelly said.

Kelly also explained that two crewmen were injured in the fire, adding one more to the list.

The fire is believed to have started in an auxiliary power system on the stern's right side. However, Kelly definitely said the George Washington has no problem with the safety of its nuclear reactors and is trouble free for its Yokosuka deployment.

16) Ishiba's MOD reform plan losing steam; Discussion likely to center on Iokibe plan to maintain present framework

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
May 25, 2008

Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba's radical MOD (Ministry of Defense) reform plan to integrate the internal bureaus (civilian group) and the staff offices of the three Self-Defense Force branches is losing steam. Chances are growing that the government's MOD reform council will produce a report in June based on a reform plan mapped out by National Defense Academy President (also reform council member) Makoto Iokibe who advocates the maintenance of the current organizational framework.

From early on, there has been criticism in the MOD and the Liberal Democratic Party about Ishiba's plan as too radical. In a council meeting held on May 21 at the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei), many voiced objections to the MOD-presented reform plans, including one produced by Ishiba. His plan has been drawing fire from within the LDP as well.

Headed by Ishiba, the MOD had to specify several options, including the Ishiba plan.

Drawing much attention is the private plan presented to the council meeting on May 21 by Iokibe, a council member. Iokibe's plan is designed to keep the internal bureaus and the SDF staff offices intact in principle, making a clear distinction with the MOD plans.

Iokibe is an advisor to Prime Minister Fukuda on foreign and security affairs. On May 4, three persons, including Ishiba, exchanged views. "In the session, the prime minister and Mr. Iokibe put a stop to Mr. Ishiba," a senior MOD official noted. A Fukuda aide, too, commented, "The Iokibe plan speaks for the prime minister's feelings." Future discussions are likely to proceed centering on the Iokibe plan.

17) Permanent SDF overseas dispatch law: Maehara plan allowing the government to make independent decision conflicts with Ozawa's stock argument

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
May 24, 2008

A group of like-minded members of the Democratic Party of Japan, including Deputy President Seiji Maehara and Lower House member Shu Watanabe, unveiled yesterday a draft plan on a permanent law governing the overseas dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces.

Specifying the country's intention to actively and independently contribute to international efforts, the plan is designed to allow the government to dispatch the SDF on overseas missions without UN resolutions based on the Diet's prior approval. Ruling out the threat of use of force, the plan also limits the area of activities to "non-combat zones," in line with the government's current interpretation of the Constitution.

The draft plan was presented by Maehara and others at the May 23 executive meeting of the Young Parliamentarians' League to Establish a Security System for a New Century, composed of ruling and opposition party members. In addition to the conventional humanitarian and reconstruction assistance, the activities of a dispatched unit include: (1) guarding; (2) minesweeping; (3) maritime intercept operations; and (4) security at sea.

DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa's basic view on the overseas dispatch of the SDF is that activities should be limited to those that are endorsed by UN resolutions or the United Nations and that the SDF can join UN peacekeeping operations that even involve the use of force. The draft plan by Maehara and others, which is wide apart from Ozawa's view, is likely to stir up a controversy within the DPJ.

18) Poll: Cabinet support reaches 24 PERCENT

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Abridged)
May 26, 2008

The Nihon Keizai Shimbun conducted a public opinion survey on May 23-25, in which the rate of public support for Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and his cabinet was 24 PERCENT, up 3 percentage points from the last survey taken from late April through early May. The nonsupport rate for the Fukuda cabinet was still high at 64 PERCENT, down 4 points. In the breakdown of public support for political parties, the leading Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) stood at 36 PERCENT, with the ruling Liberal Democratic Party at 31 PERCENT. The DPJ outstripped the LDP for the second time in a row. This can be taken as reflecting the public criticism of a newly introduced health insurance system for the elderly. In the survey, a total of 35 PERCENT called for expanding the scope of measures to lighten or reduce insurance premiums for those in the low income bracket.

The Fukuda cabinet's support rate was below 30 PERCENT for the third time in a row. The most common reason given for not supporting the Fukuda cabinet was "he lacks leadership" at 56 PERCENT, followed by "its policies are bad" at 52 PERCENT and "it's unstable" at 32 PERCENT. Among those who support the Fukuda cabinet, the most common reason was "he's trustworthy" at 38 PERCENT, followed by "because it's an LDP cabinet" at 36 PERCENT.

The survey was taken by Nikkei Research Inc. by telephone on a random digit dialing (RDD) basis. For the survey, samples were chosen from among men and women aged 20 and over across the nation. A total of 1,514 households with one or more eligible voters were sampled, and answers were obtained from 966 persons (63.8 PERCENT).

19) Government to forgo presenting own nomination of BOJ deputy governor to current Diet session

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)

TOKYO 00001438 012 OF 013

Eve. May 26, 2008

The government decided on May 26 to forgo submitting to the Diet its nomination for the post of a deputy governor of the Bank of Japan, which has been vacant, during the current regular session. However, the government will present on May 27 its nominations for 22 posts, such as president of the Deposit Insurance Corporation, whose term expires in the fall, and the chairman of a Reemployment Supervision

Committee, which will be established soon.

Chief Cabinet Secretary General Nobutaka Machimura conveyed the decision to the steering committee chairmen of the two chambers of the Diet on the morning of May 26 and revealed it in a press conference held later in the day.

Referring to the selection of a BOJ deputy governor, Machimura stated: "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Fukuda, we made efforts to coordinate views, but we failed to reach any conclusion." He also pointed out that it would be difficult for the government to submit a nomination to the ongoing session, saying: "It is not easy to find an appropriate person and get approval."

20) View calling for censure motion against prime minister gradually gaining ground in DPJ

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Excerpt)
May 27, 2007

The main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) has forgone so far twice its plan to submit a censure motion against Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda to the House of Councillors during the current Diet session. Even if the DPJ submitted a censure motion, Fukuda would have "ignored" it. If a censure motion is ignored even if passed, the largest opposition party would have no choice but to boycott Diet deliberations. So, the DPJ has judged that if such occurs, it would be criticized for prolonged refusal to deliberate in the session.

The DPJ's strategy is to pursue through Diet deliberations the issue of the (controversial) new health insurance system for people aged 75 and older, as well as to attack the waste of road tax revenues. However, the party is now being forced to make a decision on whether to submit a censure motion against the prime minister or not during the ongoing session.

The dominant view in the DPJ was that the party should forgo such a motion during the current session on the grounds that it would be difficult to force Fukuda to dissolve the House of Representatives and call a snap election. Recently, however, the mood in the party has delicately changed.

Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama pointed out: "During the remaining three weeks (of the session), we want to use the opposition's power in the Upper House to benefit the public. So, we have no choice but to do something."

The fact that public support rates for the DPJ have topped those for the ruling Liberal Democratic Party is the major reason behind the growing calls for the submission of a censure motion against Fukuda in the largest opposition party.

21) DPJ Secretary General Hatoyama: DPJ will continue to oppose

TOKYO 00001438 013 OF 013

extension of new refueling law revision bill

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)
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When asked by reporters about his party's view on an extension of the new antiterrorism special measures law, which will expire next January, DPJ Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama said on May 23: "(The DPJ) opposed last time around. We have not found any reason for changing our opposition." He indicated in his remark that the DPJ would continue to oppose the extension of the law.

SCHIEFFER